

71. *New Ether*.—M. PELOUZE lately discovered a new ether, which he calls "Hydrocyanic," while examining the effects produced by heat on a mixture of the sulpho-vinate of barytes with cyanuret of potassium. This ether is liquid, colourless, possesses a very pungent alliaceous odour, and acts energetically on the animal economy. It is inflammable; boils at 82° under atmospheric pressure; its density is 0.787 at a temperature of 15° ; it is but little soluble in water, but is perfectly so in alcohol or sulphuric ether. It does not precipitate the nitrate of silver, and in this respect resembles hydrochloric ether, which does not decompose the salt until it has been destroyed by the action of heat. M. Pelouze regards the hydrocyanic ether as composed of equal volumes of olefiant gas, and of the vapour of prussic acid condensed one-half. The idea of searching for this ether, was suggested to M. Pelouze by an observation of M. Leige, who discovered a peculiar substance possessing acid properties, and formed by the action of barium on the sulpho-vinate of barytes; its composition was such as to lead to the conclusion, that it was a kind of alcohol, in which the oxygen was replaced by sulphur.—*Gazette des Hôpitaux*.

MISCELLANEOUS.

72. *Beaumont's Experiments*.—Our countryman, Dr. BEAUMONT's work, entitled "Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice, and on the Physiology of Digestion," was presented to the French Academy of Sciences at their meeting of the 10th of March last; and on motion of M. ARAGO, a committee was appointed to examine these experiments in order to suggest new ones if those already made were not sufficient. M. Roux stated, that a case similar to that of Dr. Beaumont's had occurred at Paris. The subject of it was a woman, and experiments relative to digestion had been made upon her, which were supposed to have hastened her death.—*Gaz. Méd. March 15th, 1834*.

73. *Examination of the Trials made with Homœopathic Medicine in the Military Hospital of St. Petersburg*. By Dr. SEIDLITZ.—The celebrated Berlin surgeon, Dieffenbach, has very truly said, that this new doctrine "offers a vast field to the most absurd reveries and antiquated superstitions, which some shallow men always prefer to whatever is clear and palpable;" and all who have perused their oracular book or institute, the "Organon of Medical Science" as it is modestly called by the author, must have arrived at the same conclusion. There is an utter destitution of all rational proofs of the opinions, or rather dogmas, there announced. Proceeding from a few appearances, at best of very exceptionable accuracy, Hahnemann leaps at once to the assertion—that no medicine ever cures a disease, unless it is capable of exciting in a healthy system symptoms altogether analogous to those which it is employed to relieve. Almost all chronic diseases, we are informed, are caused by ill-cured itch. There is no proof given of this—only we are told that it is so! Then another wondrous discovery is, that the ten-millionth part of a grain of charcoal is a very active agent in some diseases; and that many medicines are extraordinarily exalted in efficacy by the number of times the vial which contains them in solution is shaken! Yet, such is the hungry credulity of mankind, that all these good things are swallowed, nay, even digested, if we may judge from the products, we mean of the brain, which, with all suitable consistency, are inversely proportionate to the ingesta. Born and nursed in Germany, that fatherland of wild phantasies, this curious doctrine has been diffused over Switzerland and Italy—has entered France, and reached Lyons, and even Paris. Like every novelty, it blinds and infatuates many for a time. When we hear of old-established practitioners, not to allude to numerous young men, who cannot possibly be influenced in their choice by any selfish or mercenary motives, forsaking their accustomed ways, and fondly embracing the most ridiculous vagaries as the only truth, can we

explain such an occurrence in any other way than by thinking of many other absurdities which have been for a time tolerated, admired, adopted, applauded, and then ridiculed, scoffed at and despised.

Well has it been said by one of the great German poets, Goethe.—“For even when all ideas are awaiting, a word or two will supply their place; with words you may fight most famously; with words you may build a system of philosophy; if a man but hears words he will believe them.” To give a specimen of the practical excellencies of homœopathism, we cannot do better than allude to the course which has been pursued by the Russian government towards it. A Saxon physician, Dr. Hermann, the great apostle of the system in Russia, was invested by the Grand Duke Michael with full powers to display, in a course of clinical experiments, its superiority over the common practice and theory of the day.

One of the wards of the Hôpital de Tuttschin, which contained a number of soldiers affected with fever and dysentery, was allotted to his special management during a space of two months.

The following table exhibits the results:—

	Patients.	Cured.	Died.	Rem.
Common method	- 457	- 364	- —	- 93
Homœopathic do.	- 128	- 65	- 5	- 58

Notwithstanding the results of this experiment were so decisive against the new doctrine, the ministers of the Russian government some time afterwards summoned Dr. H. to Petersburg, gave him authority to select his own hospital, and to make any arrangements he thought fit. The wards were fresh painted, and every hygienic precaution faithfully executed. Even the kitchen was placed entirely under his controul and superintendence; and in order to prevent the possibility of any interference a sentinel was placed before the door, and none permitted to enter during the occasional absence of Dr. Hermann. His first request respecting the patients was a very moderate and modest one, viz. that none should be sent to his hospital who laboured under ulcers, syphilis, dropsy, phthisis, &c. and that he should have the selection of all his cases!! Even under these most fortunate circumstances, the results were most unfavourable to the new practice; the proportion of deaths to recoveries was much higher than in ordinary practice, and the duration of the treatment was always protracted and tedious. Here is a specimen of the reports. The case is pronounced one of peripneumonia.

History.—Patient ill for seven days; severe frontal cephalalgia; pains in the eyes; tongue clean but dry; thirst; bitter taste in the mouth; anorexia; bowels open; dry cough during the night, and this is accompanied with pains in one side, which are increased on pressure; pains felt in the arms; skin cool; pulse full and not frequent.

An infinitesimal dose of arnica ordered. Next day but little change; but after this the symptoms gradually subsided, and the patient was discharged cured on the nineteenth day after admission.

A well-marked example of peripneumonia indeed!! A slight catarrh with an equally slight disturbance of the stomach. Forty-seven cases are detailed by Dr. Seidlitz, many of which are still less entitled to the epithets bestowed upon them.—*Rev. Méd. Feb. 1834, from Hecker's Annals, November, 1833.*

74. *Death of St. John Long.*—This notorious individual, the most successful quack of the day, in one sense of the word at least, died lately in London. It appears that he fell a victim to the very disease, (pulmonary consumption,) for the cure of which he pretended to possess an infallible cure. A remarkable commentary this upon the blind credulity of his numerous dupes, among whom were several persons of rank, and in other respects of intelligence.